

Czechoslovak Journals Criticized for Balking at New Censorship

By ALVIN SHUSTER
Special to The New York Times

PRAGUE, April 5—The Executive Committee of the Communist party's Presidium issued a scathing attack on the mass media today for balking at the restoration of tight censorship.

The ruling eight-member committee accused journalists in the press, radio and television of insincerity, protection of "antisocialist forces," defiance of party policy and irresponsibility.

Stressing earlier charges by the 21-member Presidium that journalists had helped stir up anti-Soviet feelings to a point of crisis in recent weeks, the committee made clear that the party would not brook any sign of resistance to the decision, made under Soviet pressure, to reimpose prepublication censorship.

The angry declaration was touched off by a response to the party's decision by the Czechoslovak Union of Journalists. The union's statement indicated opposition to prepublication censorship and said journalists preferred to continue to take the responsibility for what they published.

The union expressed fear that the new curbs would lead to "serious weakening" of the relations between the mass media and millions of citizens.

"Honest newspapers, the same as radio and television," the journalists said, "are always a true reflection of all that by which society lives—a mirror of its problems and anxieties."

Tight controls on the mass media were lifted in March, 1968 as a major part of the liberalization movement, just two months after the progressive forces under Alexander Dubcek assumed power from Antonin Novotny. The relaxation ordered by the leaders was formally approved by the National Assembly last June, and until this week, the mass media had been operating under self-censorship with guidelines.

New limitations imposed on the press under a Central Committee resolution in November after the Soviet-led invasion were more apparent than real.

The reimposition of censorship reflected Soviet pressure after Czech rioters attacked

Russian installations March 21 following a Czechoslovak ice-hockey victory over the Soviet team.

Two Soviet Aides Arrive

Marshal Andrei A. Grechko, the Soviet Defense Minister, and Vladimir S. Semyonov, a Deputy Foreign Minister, arrived March 24 without a Czechoslovak invitation. The Soviet officials were reported to have told the Czechoslovak leaders, that Russian tanks would move unless the party took drastic steps. Their visit coincided with repeated unconfirmed rumors of Soviet troop movements.

Under evident Soviet pressure, the Czechoslovak Presidium on Wednesday announced new press curbs, threatened the discipline of party members, and rebuked Josef Smrkovsky, a liberal member of the Presidium and of the Executive Committee itself.

While the inclination of the reform-minded trade union leaders and of people in general is to forego any strikes and massive demonstrations now, the Executive Committee implied in today's statement that the party wanted to head off even a passive show of defiance, particularly from the press.

Tight ideological controls and a marked strengthening of the party's leading role were the order of the day.

Newsmen's Plea Rejected

The executive committee rejected the journalists' plea that self-censorship remain, saying they had not shown responsibility in the past.

The censorship steps so far this week have included orders to newspapers to prepare desks for government-picked censors who will clear all articles. Magazines are sending their material to a central office for clearance. There have been staff changes at Rude Pravo, the party newspaper, attacked by the Presidium for insufficiently supporting party resolutions, and at least three television programs have been deleted from listings, including a discussion program scheduled for today.

The key to possible trouble hinges on what happens next; whether, for example, the party follows up the implied threat to Mr. Smrkovsky and dismisses him from his high party posts, leaving him only with the distinction of deputy chairman of the National Assembly.

An ominous sign was seen by his supporters today in an article in Rude Pravo, which said it was important "when speaking about the leadership to keep in mind the party bodies and not only a few of its members."

Mr. Smrkovsky's ouster, long sought by Moscow, could touch off strikes by workers and students long committed to such action.